

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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FM AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2499

INFO USIA WASHDC

AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

USMISSION BERLIN

AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: HU, PINT, SCUL

SUBJ: HUNGARIAN COMEDIAN IMITATES KADAR ON TELEVISION

1. IN AN ACT WITHOUT PRECEDENT, GEZA HOFI, HUNGARY'S LEADING COMEDIAN, IMITATED HSWP FIRST SECRETARY JANOS KADAR ON NEW YEAR'S EVE TV PROGRAM WITH AN AUDIENCE OF OVER FIVE MILLION.

2. THIS VERY FUNNY ACT, WHICH HOFI PERFORMED ON STAGE OF ONE OF BUDAPEST'S POLITICAL CABARET THEATERS (THE MIKROSKOP SZINPAD) THROUGHOUT 1973, COULD NOT HAVE BEEN PRESENTED WITHOUT CLEARANCE FROM TOP. JANUARY 2 CULTURAL PAGE OF HSWP DAILY NEPSZABADSAG CARRIED FAVORABLE REVIEW OF SHOW. PUBLIC REACTION HAS BEEN WIDESPREAD, WITH NEARLY EVERYONE AGREEING IT IS ONE OF CLEAREST INDICATIONS YET THAT KADAR WILL STAY AND THAT NO MAJOR SHIFTS IN POLICY ARE LIKELY AT MARCH 11TH PARTY CONGRESS. WE REGARD SHOW A FURTHER STEP TOWARD GRADUALLY RELAXING PUBLIC TENSION RE POSSIBLE TIGHTENING OF IDEOLOGICAL

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POLICY.

3. ANOTHER UNPRECEDENTED EVENT WAS APPEARANCE OF A CARTOON ON FRONT PAGE OF EVENING TABLOID ESTI HIRLAP JANUARY 2, SHOWING A SMILING KADAR WITH HIS HAND ON HOFI'S SHOULDER SAYING "LAST TIME, WITH THE CRITIC, YOU WERE A LITTLE STRONG". CARTOON REFERS TO BOTH NEW YEAR'S PROGRAM AND ANOTHER ONE DONE BY HOFI TWO DAYS EARLIER, IN WHICH HE RIDICULED RATHER HARSHLY A DRAMA CRITIC FOR NOT APPRECIATING HIS HUMOR. CONSENSUS OF HUNGARIANS IS THAT CARTOON IMPLIES THAT TAKE-OFF ON KADAR WAS O.K. AND THAT KADAR DID NOT MIND, BUT THAT HOFI WOULD DO BETTER NOT TO PICK ON SMALLY FRY SO HARSHLY. LATTER ASSESSMENT IS SHARED BY EMBOFF WHO SAW PROGRAM.

4. COMMENT: THESE RATHER REMARKABLE EVENTS ATTEST FURTHER TO CONTINUANCE OF KADAR'S BWEAC APPROACH OF MAINTAINING A BALANCE BETWEEN CONSERVATIVE AND LIBERAL FORCES IN PARTY. WHENEVER ACTIONS ARE TAKEN WHICH TEND TO LEAN TO ONE SIDE, THEY ARE QUICKLY AND CAREFULLY BALANCED WITH OTHERS TENDING IN OPPOSITE DIRECTION. THESE LATEST EVENTS DEMONSTRATE IMPORTANCE ATTACHED IN HUNGARY TO NURTURING AN IMAGE OF CONTINUITY AND BALANCE IN INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL POLICIES, A STATE OF AFFAIRS WHICH ON BALANCE WILL PROBABLY REMAIN UNCHANGED AFTER 11TH PARTY CONGRESS.
PEDERSEN

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